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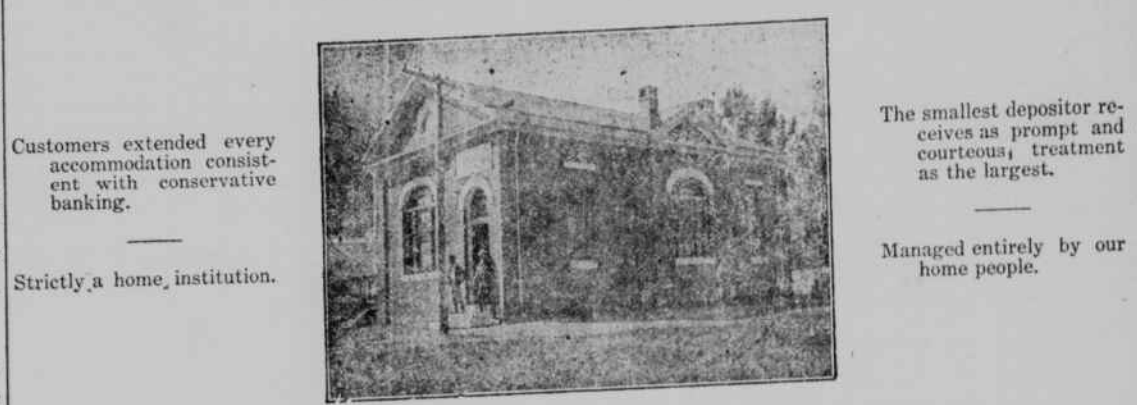
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Parkersley, Va.

## Saving the Company.

By CARLETON HAZZARD.

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After a long line of incompetent stenographers Bradley congratulated himself when Alice Fuller took her place at the typewriter desk, and as though by magic the crooked places were made straight.

So quietly did the girl slip into the routine of the office and so unostentatiously did she accomplish results that Arthur Bradley did not realize all that she was doing. He had only the pleasant feeling that at last the office was running straight, and, unawake, he took the credit to himself.

It had been a struggle to get the office going at all, for the firm was in opposition to the trust, and everything possible was done to break up the newly established branch office.

More than once Bradley had narrowly escaped some trap laid for him, but for every blow struck at him he gave back as good. The letters from the home office were encouraging and intimate that if he would round out the first year there would be an increase of salary as well as the present of a block of stock.

The biggest feather in his cap was when the home office turned over to him the task of securing a contract for some \$2,000.00 worth of material.

"Such big contracts are usually handled from the home office," he explained to Alice Fuller as he gave her the letter with instructions to place it in the private letter file in the safe. "If they turn this matter over to me it is a sign that they have faith in my judgment. It's going to be a ticklish matter to figure on all that material at a price that will be low enough to capture the contract and still give us as much of a profit as possible."

"They probably realize that you are close to the contract, and they know that they can trust you," answered Alice. "It shows that this branch is becoming important."

She went quietly about her work, but there was a happy light in her eyes, for she was as much pleased at this sign of confidence as was Bradley himself.

Alice was not a girl of impulses, but she had come to have more than a liking for Bradley, and she took a pride in his success.

The week that followed was a busy one. Bradley figured far into the night on the problems of cost, and each morning he gave to Alice the results of his work, to be tabulated on the machine and filed in the safe until the figures should be completed. It was weary work with all the specifications and blanks, but at last the estimate was complete, and Bradley took it on to New York in person for the approval of the home office.

He was jubilant on his return. The president of the company had congratulated him on the excellence of his work and had hinted that the new London office might be opened soon with Bradley in charge.

But the jubilation was short lived, for two days later a long letter came from the New York office instructing the branch to alter the estimates in accordance with a set of figures some 10 per cent in advance of the original estimate.

"Here's a job for you," growled Bradley as he took the paper to Alice's desk. "I'll have to do as the home office says, but it's throwing away the contract and my chance of promotion."

"Are you certain that it is the order of the New York office?" asked Alice as she took up the sheets. "You know that this contract will mean a great deal to the trust if they are able to take it away from us. It means a great deal more to us to retain it."

"That's just it," complained Bradley. "They know that if we lose this contract we lose our right for an independent existence and shall have to sell out to the trust at their own price. If we get it, it will mean that we can beat them and hold our own. Yet they raise my figures."

"And it would be worth a great effort to beat us," went on Alice. "Suppose that the trust people had some one planted in the home office who could copy the figures and send them to the trust officers. Suppose, too, that they supplied the people with our letter heads and envelopes. We would be unsuspecting and change the bid in accordance with instructions, only to find out that we had been duped after the bids had been opened and the contract awarded to the trust. I think you will find that they have bid only slightly lower than this, but much higher than your original figures."

"That's possible," admitted Bradley. "I'll wire the home office and find out. And warn the traitor in the office that his plans have been discovered?" reminded Alice. "They will then bid below your figures and get the contract anyway. It would be best to hold on and take chances by yourself. It will be the only way to hold the contract."

"If I only could be sure," exclaimed Bradley. "But I can't act on mere guesswork."

"This is something more than guesswork," insisted Alice. "In the first place this letter is mailed from the Madison square station. That is in the building in which the trust has its main office. Our letters all come from the Wall street station, four or five miles away and nearest our office. They are using the same make of typewriter President Hammond's stenographer uses, but it is not the same machine. On the letters from our office there is a piece broken from the cross of every 't'."

"I think you are right," cried Bradley as he compared two letters. "We'll pop in the original estimate, and when they come to open the bids our trust friends will have a dozen hits."

"But answer this letter and say that changes have been made in the bid in accordance with instructions and that the bid has been submitted," directed Alice. "Then the traitor will not become alarmed and notify the trust to put in the lower bid."

"You're the general," cried Bradley admiringly. "I am only the second in command until this is straightened out. Do just as you please."

That evening a letter went to the home office reporting that the changes had been made as directed, but Bradley personally took to the office of the contracting company the original bid.

Two days later a long telegram arrived from the head office demanding the explanation of the changes to which Bradley made reference. It was Alice who wrote the telegram in reply, explaining what those changes were, and who wrote the second message declaring it to be impossible to alter the bid to the old figures, as they directed by wire.

The next morning President Hammond stamped into the office shortly after Bradley had come in.

"I came out on the fast train to see what it all means," he cried. "You have ruined the company by letting yourself be fooled in this fashion."

For reply Bradley brought out the letter he had received. It started Hammond, for beyond question it was on the paper of the company and not on a cheap imitation. He sighed as he laid it down.

"I suppose that you cannot be blamed," he said dispiritedly, "but it means that the company is smashed by a trick of the trust."

"Not yet," declared Bradley, with a laugh. "Miss Fuller's quick eyes saw through the trick. We took a chance and put in the original bid. I think you will find that we are the lowest bidders, for the trust felt safe in keeping up their bid."

"We win, you can have the London office next month," declared Hammond.

## FANTAN AT MACAO.

Gambling Houses of the Monte Carlo of the East.

Macao, a Portuguese-Chinese port at the mouth of the Canton river, in China, is the Monte Carlo of the east. One must wait until evening to see the famous "fanten" houses. The interiors are brilliantly lighted with oil lamps (for Macao boasts neither electricity nor gas) and furnished with Canton blackwood elaborately carved and upholstered in velvet. There are two floors. The coolie class remains on the ground floor, where the actual games take place, but in the room above, immediately over the table in the room below, there is a square "well" with a rail around it and a narrow table furnished with betting books and pencils, cigarettes, etc.

The visitor may take a seat and look down at the game, which really seems fair and simple. A man sits at the head of the table with a huge heap of brass "cash" before him and a slender wand in his hand. He takes up a handful of the coin and puts it on the table, covering it with a brass hat. Then the betting begins, the bets being laid on the number 1, 2, 3 or 4, after which the banker takes up the hat and counts out the cash in four, separating them with his cane, the number left when the last "four" is removed being the subject of the betting. These houses, numerous as they are, make an enormous income and are a source of large revenue to Macao.—Exchange.

## JAPANESE PAGODAS.

Enormous Pendulums Render These Old Structures Earthquake Proof.

The only old structures in Japan which seem to be earthquake proof are the pagodas. There are many which are 700 or 800 years old and as solid as when first built.

There is a reason for this, and it lies in their construction. A pagoda is practically a framework of heavy timbers which starts from a wide base and is in itself a substantial structure, but rendered still more stable by a peculiar device. Inside the framework and suspended from the apex is a long, heavy beam of timber two feet thick or more. This hangs from one end of the four sides. Four more heavy timbers, and if the pagoda be very lofty still more timbers, are added to these. The whole forms an enormous pendulum, which reaches within six inches of the ground.

When the shock of an earthquake rocks the pagoda the pendulum swings in unison and keeps the center of gravity always at the base of the framework. Consequently the equilibrium of the pagoda is never disturbed, and this is the explanation of the great age of many of them, when from their height one would suppose them to be peculiarly susceptible to the effects of the earthquake.

## France and Fourteen.

So far as France is concerned, it is the number fourteen that has played a conspicuous and portentous part in her history. On May 14, 1564, the Rue de la Ferronnerie was enlarged by order of Henri II., and four times fourteen years later Henri IV. was assassinated there by Ravallac—namely, on May 14, 1610. Henri had lived four times fourteen years, fourteen weeks and four times fourteen days—that is, fifty-six years and five months. Then Henri's son, Louis XIII., died May 14, 1643, the same day and month as his father. And 1693 added together equals fourteen, just as 1553, the year of the birth of Henri IV., equals fourteen. Louis XIV. ascended the throne 1643, which, added together, equals fourteen, and similarly the year of his death (1715) equals fourteen.—London P. T. O.

## Kept Them All on Edge.

One of the favorite devices of Lord Nelson when ships were cruising in company was to signal to a given craft that Lieutenant Smith or Staff Engineer Brown or Captain of Staff Marjones was to take charge, on the assumption that all his superior officers on board had been put out of action. The author of "Trafalgar fought" says that the result was very good, for no one knew when he might be called upon to take command, and every one therefore made a point of trying to make himself fit to carry out the duty should it ever be assigned to him.

## Selfish Etiquette.

Some rules in an old book on etiquette seem to encourage a practice commonly called "looking out for No. 1." Here are two of them:

When cake is passed do not finger each piece, but with a quick glance select the best.

Never refuse to taste of a dish because you are unfamiliar with it or you will lose the taste of many delicacies while others profit by your absence, to your lasting regret.

## Not Superstitious.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" asked the man who resents all superstition. "No, sir," answered Erasmus Pinkley. "Ah! all I's hopin' is dat dem ghos'es will lemme stay dat way 'til o' comin' aroun' tryin' to convince me."

## A Different Proposition.

Pomposus Director (hotly)—Why did you refuse to give my son a fair chance to show what he could do? Don't you believe in introducing young blood in the business? Superintendent—I do, but not young bloods.—Puck.

## Out of the Usual.

"I have something novel in the way of a melodrama."  
"State your case."  
"The blacksmith is a rascal, while the banker is as honest as the day is long!"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

## Outspoken.

Mrs. Garulouso—I was outspoken in my sentiments at the club this afternoon. Her Husband—I can't believe you. Who outspoken you, my dear?—London Mail.

## Happy is the man who does all the good he talks of.—Italian Proverb.

## They're All Old.

"I am about," said the speaker, "to tell a story which I believe is new to most of you."

"Gee," interrupted a little man at the end of the banquet hall, "that fellow would believe anything!"—Chicago Record-Herald.

## A Mountain of Alum.

In China, twelve and a half miles from the village of Liouchee, there is a mountain of alum which in addition to being a natural curiosity is a source of wealth for the inhabitants of the country, who dig from it yearly tons of alum. The mountain is not less than ten miles in circumference at its base and has a height of 1,940 feet. The alum is obtained by quarrying large blocks of stone, which are first heated in great furnaces and then in vats filled with boiling water. The alum crystallizes out and forms a layer about six inches in thickness. This layer is subsequently broken up into blocks weighing about ten pounds each.

## Bird Structure.

Birds belong to the vertebrates, or backbone animals. They are distinguished from the rest of the vertebrates by the graceful outlines of their bodies, by their clothing of feathers, toothless jaws, and the fore limbs, or wings, being adapted to flying. Nature has made many wonderful provisions in the bird, especially in the formation and arrangement of the bones. These are compact and in many cases hollow, thus combining lightness with strength. The first bone of the backbone is so freely jointed to the skull that birds can turn their heads around and look directly back.

## Aims From a Tomb.

A remarkable custom which has been uninterrupted in force for 200 years is yearly observed at Ideford, a secluded parish a few miles from Chudleigh. It is that of picking up alms from the donor's tomb in the churchyard. The rector and churchwarden stand at one end of the tomb, upon the flat top of which they place coins. The recipients of the charity come up one by one to the other end of the tomb and pick up the money.—London Standard.

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